

Interview for “Their Stories: Lowell’s Youth and The Refugee Experience”

Date: October 30, 2013

Place: International Institute, Lowell MA

Interviewee: Naina Adhikari (from Nepal and Bhutan)

Interviewer: Diana Regus (student at UMass Lowell)

(Recording 1)

Diana: So just for the... oh no I have the number. So just for the recording, can you say your name again and your last name?

Naina: Naina Adhikari.

Diana: And you are from Nepal, right?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: And what... do you guys have countries or states... is it like here where we have states. Do you guys have states?

Naina: We don't have states like here, but we have like regions.

Diana: Regions.

Naina: Like mountainous regions, Terai region, like that.

Diana: So are you from...

Naina: I am from kind of like city, like Terai, it's not a mountainous place, but it's like plain like here.

Diana: Cool. So why... why did you come to the United States?

Naina: Well, it's a long story.

Diana: I have all the time.

Naina: My parents are actually from Bhutan and my ancestors, great-great ancestors were in Nepal before, right. But Bhutan is a very small country and they had a lot of lands too, but the population was very small in Bhutan. So my ancestors heard

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about Bhutan, right, but in Nepal they didn't have enough land to grow crops and etcetera, so they went to Bhutan without any documents, they didn't have legal documents. They just went to Bhutan because they needed lands to grow crops.

After many years, maybe like a hundred, not a hundred, but 50-60 years, the king decided to ask for... started to ask for the documents. Where are your documents, where did you come from, do you have any legal documents like that and my ancestors...

Diana: So after 50-60 years of living there, they are asking for documents?

Naina: Yes, they are asking for the documents.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: I don't know why and so then... my ancestors didn't have anything to prove that they are immigrants, right? Legal immigrants, so the king started to tell them to move back from where you came from. So they... if your... my parents and grandparents said no... we didn't want to go back, because we had been living here for several years and we got used to it, but the king started to like... rape women and like kill people like men.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: They started to threaten... threaten the people. So they had to move back to Nepal as refugees. My parents and grandparents moved to Nepal in '90-'91 and then we were in the camp... refugee camp. I was born after two years after they moved there. So I was born in the refugee camp and grew up in the refugee camp. I lived there for 16 years.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Once they moved back to Nepal. Why is it that you have to move to a refugee camp? Can you move to the city? Can you move to another area of Nepal? Do you have to be... moving from another country, does that mean that automatically have to go to the refugee camp?

Naina: No, because... well I guess they could, but they didn't have a citizenship of Nepal. So I guess they had to be in the refugee camp, but some people, like the rich

people, they bought citizenship and they moved... they settled in a different places too. Some of them can, but it's rare.

Diana: It isn't like here where you could apply for citizenship.

Naina: Not really.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: It was like that in Nepal, like that, so...

Diana: I am just going to check this again, because last...

(Recording 2)

Diana: So you were born in the refugee camp and you lived there for 16 years. So how did you go from refugee camp to here, the United States?

Naina: There is like a UN, an organization, an international organization for migration. So basically, that organization did everything for us. We couldn't choose a country, like we couldn't choose if we wanted to go to the United States or Australia or like that. They chose the country for us and...

Diana: How do they do that? Did this just go... like how do they...

Naina: I don't know, I don't know how they do that, but if you have a family member who is already here, then they ask, "Do you want to go..."

Diana: Did you guys have family members here?

Naina: Yes, in the United States, but we didn't have anyone in Lowell.

Diana: In Lowell. What was your first impression when you finally made it here to the United States?

Naina: Well first impression was when I got out of the plane; I was really tired because it was 24 hours...

Diana: It's 24 hours?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Oh my.

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Naina: Almost 24-hour flight, so.

Diana: And you didn't do [inaudible 00:01:08] or anything... you didn't stop... was there any stop in between, was it 24 hours straight?

Naina: Not a 24-hour flight, but we had to wait in between...

Diana: I would die...

Naina: That's a long flight, oh my God; I think it was 13 hours in the plane. Yes, it was really long and I was tired, so I didn't really feel like talking to anyone. But when I got off the plane, people were very polite and helpful. They were welcoming.

Diana: Oh nice.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Is that different from Nepal and...

Naina: Not really, because people are welcoming in Nepal too.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: But I really liked it because we are from different country and even people from here were welcoming and talk to us like we were from here too. Do you know what I mean?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Not like strangers or...

Diana: Not like, who are this people? It's welcoming.

Naina: Yes, it's welcoming.

Diana: Cool. So you were 16 when you got here.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Did you go to... did you go to Lowell, High or did you go...?

Naina: Yes, I went to Lowell High for one and a half years.

Diana: That was your junior year, right?

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Naina: Junior and senior years.

Diana: How was that?

Naina: Well junior year was very hard. It was just half... it was already the second semester when, no second quarter when I was there. It was really hard to catch up in the classes too. I didn't have really... I didn't know English that much at the time, so it was really hard to communicate with all the students and classmates in the class.

Diana: Trust me, I know.

Naina: I know, it was very hard. Even if you wanted to ask a question in the class like to the teachers, it's really hard to raise your hand and ask. You don't have that confidence to ask questions. You feel like the other students are going to laugh at you, because of your wrong English.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So it was really hard and even though I didn't really understand anything, I would stay after class and ask the teacher like that.

Diana: Yes, I went through that too. I came from the Dominican Republic and it was the same thing, but it was sophomore year, it was second semester of my sophomore year. I hated it, learning a new language and all that.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Was it easy, I mean not easy but at one point say, "Oh my gosh, I'm never going to learn English?"

Naina: No, I didn't have... in my country they asked us to write paragraphs and essays in English, but we didn't really speak. Do you know what I mean?

Diana: Okay.

Naina: We did speak... I knew some of English though, I wasn't like, no English at all, I had to write paragraphs and essays... simple essays, like house, like my country is and like that.

Diana: Okay. You knew some.

Naina: Yes, but I couldn't speak and the tone, accent is really different here, right? Yes.

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Diana: I love your accent, by the way.

Naina: Thank you.

Diana: So you graduated high school. Are you the only one; did you come with your parents, did you come with more people? Did you have siblings?

Naina: I came with my family, yes. I have two sisters and a brother.

Diana: How old are your sisters?

Naina: My sister is... one of my sisters is 18 and the other 16, so they are both in high school now.

Diana: They are both in high school now, so you were the first one to graduate high school?

Naina: Yes, yes.

Diana: How was that, was it a huge deal in your family.

Naina: Yes, it was huge, because nobody really went to college in my family. My parents didn't have time to go to college and study living in a refugee camp. I was the first one to graduate. I think from Bhutanese community, not only from my family, but from Bhutanese community in Lowell.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Me and my friend Leela, were the only two that first graduated...

Diana: Great, congratulations.

Naina: Thanks. Yes, we really didn't know anything about graduation. In our... in our country, they have a graduation ceremony for college and stuff, but they don't have a graduation ceremony in high school.

Diana: What do they do, do they just pass you?

Naina: They do have a graduation ceremony, but it's really different from here. They do it outside of this and give you a certificate, it's not like a diploma. But they just give you a certificate. There are divisions, not from all schools, but from classes. They give you first division, second division, and third division, like that. They choose three students from a class and give you some kind of prize and then a certificate.

Diana: So how did you... I got the impression that in Nepal or Bhutan that college wasn't hard, because you mentioned earlier that the [inaudible] and all that stuff before it was harder. Did you have the same opportunities to go to college over there that you have here.

Naina: I didn't go to college in Nepal. Because I think I was in 10th grade when I came here, halfway...

Diana: How would that be different? Let's say you graduated from 12th grade in Nepal, would it have been as easy or would you know... would you have the opportunity to go to college, as compared to here that once you got out of high school, you went to college?

Naina: Well in Nepal, we don't have to be... we graduated in 10th grade, right, yes?

Diana: Oh.

Naina: Then 11th and 12th grade, you have to go to college for that, like campus.

Diana: Oh, wow.

Naina: Then after that... but we didn't have any financial aid and stuff. So it would have been really hard to go to college, especially in my community because my dad was the only one working in the family. So yes, it would have been harder for, I think, yes.

Diana: How did you start thinking about college? When did you say, "I want to go to Middlesex and this is what I want to major in?" And what are you majoring in?

Naina: I am majoring in nursing. I always wanted to be a nurse, I don't know why, but since my childhood. I used to love... when I used to go to hospitals... because hospitals in camps are really bad. I don't get enough time to really talk to... like sit down and really talk to doctors one-on-one and it was really packed and you had to wait in line to do stuff. You couldn't really talk to the doctors with your problem one-to-one. You had a nurse and I don't know, it's really different, we didn't have this kind of facilities.

Once my mom was really sick and I was little. We had to take her to hospital and we took her to hospital, but it was really hard to meet the doctor and talk to them. But there was a nurse, she was really nice and she helped us. If she wasn't there, then my mom maybe wouldn't be here. Do you know what I mean? She was really sick. So at the time... I don't know I just feel like just one person can change someone's life.

Diana: That's really nice.

Naina: So yes, I just wanted to be a nurse since that time.

Diana: Nice. When you think of the camps... now help me here, because I am confused, I don't really know exactly what a camp is.

Naina: Okay camps, let me see... we had houses that were bamboo and thatches; they were shelters, not houses. Do you know what I mean? Really small and we used to have two rooms and we lived together with all the family. It was really... the houses were really close and we didn't have water; running water in our houses. We had a water tank and we had to go there to fill water, to get water. Yes and our hospitals and schools were inside the camp, they were not outside. We were not allowed to go outside of the camp.

Diana: For anything, like at all?

Naina: Yes, we weren't supposed to not go outside, but people used to go outside because they had to work out... like work for their families. So they used to go out... they went out not as refugees, they couldn't say they were refugees... they were refugees, they had to say they were Nepali citizens.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Yes, they had to lie and work outside. In the camp, it was very bad, miserable, yes.

Diana: I can imagine.

Naina: I know.

Diana: How many people would you say were at a time were in the camp?

Naina: Oh in our camp it was like 22,000.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Yes in our camp, just one camp and there were like seven camps in Nepal.

Diana: How big, okay think of Lowell High School and how big that is. Was it a size like that, I mean the...

Naina: The camp?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Oh no, no, the camp was bigger than that.

Diana: Was it like a whole city?

Naina: Not a whole city, but even bigger... I don't know maybe not Lowell, but maybe that... I don't know how to explain, but maybe downtown area...

Diana: Downtown area?

Naina: Yes, maybe bigger than that.

Diana: Okay and was it gated,

Naina: It wasn't gated, but we had some kind of boundaries, yes.

Diana: Yes. I was going to ask what do you miss the most about Nepal?

Naina: I miss Nepal... like the place. It was so beautiful in Nepal, it's green and then we have small lakes and canals.

Diana: Wow.

Naina: Yes, it was very beautiful. I really miss my friends and relatives, because when I first came here, I didn't have any friends, right. I just really had to get... get it mixed with other people. As you know, Lowell High School is very diverse and there are so many people from different countries. It was really hard to be friends with them at first, so I really missed my friends and relatives at that time. Yes.

Diana: Do you think you have changed after coming here to the United States?

Naina: Yes, I think I have, I have changed.

Diana: In a good way, in a bad way?

Naina: Yes, in a good way, yes. If I wanted to change in a bad way, I could because there are some bad influences too but...

Diana: Can you talk more about that, like the bad influences here?

Naina: Bad influences, meaning... like teenagers, right now are really rude. Yes, they are rude. They are very rude, right? Specifically when they talk to elders, they are really rude. They don't care, like they don't respect any elders.

Diana: Very true.

Naina: Yes, but in our culture we really respect elders and anyone who is older than us. Even smaller, smaller people like children, but right now, I know that when I was in high school teenagers were really rude. Some of them were nice, but some of them were like really.

Diana: Yes, no respect for elders.

Naina: Yes, even no respect for friends and they don't care, they just don't care.

Diana: Obviously, that is something that in your culture is very important.

Naina: Yes, it's very important.

Diana: Do you think that... I am not saying you, but I am pretty sure you know of other immigrants. Do you think that other immigrants or even your sisters that you said are in high school now, do you think you could lose that value sometimes?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Or is it really easy to hold on to that value?

Naina: Yes, it depends on family values, because some families are really strict about their values and they don't want their children to lose it. But some families, like we're here in America and you can do whatever you want to, adapt here. They're like that, right? But our family is really... they are in the middle, my parents are not really strict and they are not loose. I mean we have to adapt in America, but you have to preserve your values too, so.

Diana: Good.

Naina: So yes.

Diana: Are there values that you have adapted from American culture that you did not have in Nepal?

Naina: Like...

Diana: Anything, maybe I don't know the way you talk, like the way you express yourself sometimes. Even like how you dress now or even I don't know, the value of education, anything.

Naina: Yes, definitely the way I dress has changed. I used to wear kurtas and stuff.

Diana: What are...

Naina: Kurtas are long, it's a pretty dress. I used to wear that a lot. We are not allowed to wear short skirts and those things. When I came here, I decided to wear jeans and short skirts and those sorts of things.

Diana: How was that. Did you feel weird, different or were you like, "Yes!" Like jeans and skirts.

Naina: I didn't feel weird, but it was... I don't know how to explain that. But yes, it was different.

Diana: How did your parents feel about that?

Naina: At first they were angry, yes. Angry like, "Don't wear that...." like short skirts like that, but later they did understand.

Diana: Yes, that's good. In what ways is the American culture similar to Ne.... do you say Nepali culture or Nepal culture?

Naina: Nepali culture.

Diana: Nepali culture.

Naina: Similarities... I didn't really see any similarities.

Diana: Really?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Oh wow that's...

Naina: There are some differences though. When we talk to people... that was the hardest thing when I first came here. We wouldn't raise our eyes and talk to people like that... like have eye contact...

Diana: You can't...

Naina: No.

Diana: You wouldn't do that in Nepal?

Naina: No, that is disrespect.

Diana: Oh.

Naina: They might do that in professional business, those things, but not like...

Diana: Talking to... I don't know, my dad. I wouldn't look him in the eyes?

Naina: No, not straight in the eyes. You have to... when you look...

Diana: Like look like... like I was talking to you.

Naina: I know, it's... you can't... that is like dis... disrespect.

Diana: Oh, I didn't know that, that is very interesting.

Naina: Yes, so when I was in class, my teacher was talking to me, right and I was looking down and she is yelling at me, "Why are you not looking at me? You're supposed to have eye contact with me when I am talking. Are you ignoring me, blah, blah, blah...?"

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: No, I was... I didn't know how to...

Diana: Culture shock for you.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: I don't want to look at you.

Naina: It wasn't that bad, but I didn't look at her and I didn't know how to explain to her that I wasn't ignoring her. I think she asked my friend about that... she was like, "She doesn't look at me, what's the problem." She was like, "No in our culture you don't look at people when we're talking, we can't."

Diana: So is that even between families? What about talking to your sisters?

Naina: No that's not the case with sisters and friends.

Diana: But it's elders and people of respect?

Naina: Yes, you have to have respect. If you look down or directly in the eyes...

Diana: That is very difficult.

Naina: It was very different.

Diana: Now when I think about it, it's really not because the way things are going now, people are even afraid to talk to other people. People walk by and you are like, they're like, "Hi."

Naina: I know, because of the technology, texting, video, and everything. People are sitting next to each other and they are texting instead of talking.

Diana: You obviously, never see that in Nepal.

Naina: No.

Diana: If you see someone, do you say good morning?

Naina: Of course, yes, we talk a lot. I didn't have a cell phone when I was back in Nepal, so I wouldn't use a cell phone or have a computer. There were cyber cafes, so we used to go there and pay for it, 20 rupees for an hour and then play on the computer or chat with friends. But we didn't have a computer at home.

Diana: How much is a dollar over there?

Naina: It's 100...

Diana: Because you said 20 rupees.

Naina: Hundred rupees, a dollar, right now but it goes down and up.

Diana: So a soda here is \$2.00, how much would a soda be over there, 200?

Naina: 200

Diana: So it's the same value? For example in DR, this computer might cost me 500 here, but in DR it might cost me 700 dollars.

Naina: It's 100 rupee per one dollar.

Diana: Yes.

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Naina: If it's \$2 for a soda here, then it's 200 rupees in Nepal, yes double.

Diana: Okay, so things are not more expensive over there, they are the same as here?

Naina: No, they are expensive.

Diana: It's so interesting. Going back to... you were saying... I really like the story about when your mom was... I am sorry your mom was sick. But I like the story that you were saying that you saw that nurse and thanks to that nurse, your mom was able to get better, things like that. Was that like... is that an inspiration to you now to keep doing nursing...

Naina: Yes, it is.

Diana: ... and is that what you would like to be? Do you want to stay here in the states and do your nursing career here or would you like to go back to Nepal and help out?

Naina: I haven't really thought about that, but I would love to go back and help people there, because I think the people in Nepal need more help than people here. There are a lot of laws and they have a lot of facilities here, but not in Nepal... I haven't really thought about that, but I want to do something. Maybe be a doctor later, but yes.

Diana: What are you looking forward to, what do you... you are here now. Do you consider yourself... I don't want to say American, because you're obviously Nepali... how you... is that how you...

Naina: Nepali, yes.

Diana: Okay, I was going to say Nepalian, but that makes no sense. So you obviously consider yourself Nepali, but would you say that now being here, going to college here, and having a career here, and trying to study here... do you consider yourself in a way an American?

Naina: Yes, I do, because I have been living here for four years and the government has really helped us too. I mean for everything, because we really didn't have anything when we first came here.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So the government has, in the United States, has just helped us a lot... So I need to give it back to the community, to the government, you know what I mean? So

I definitely consider myself an American and do whatever I need to do, like a duty.

Diana: Yes. How do you like Lowell... Lowell specific?

Naina: I like Lowell. I love Lowell. In some cities my friends are all over the United States.

Diana: Oh they are?

Naina: Yes, they are and they talk about their cities and etcetera. Some of my friends don't really have diverse communities. They only have like white people, know I mean their community is not as diverse as Lowell, because Lowell is really diverse.

Diana: Do you like that?

Naina: Yes, I like that, because... I don't know, I like...

Diana: Have you... I don't know how you will like these questions, but for example me when I was living in DR, all I knew was Dominicans. So when I came here I never had a Chinese friend or an Egyptian friend or whatever. When I came here I had a friend of every nationality. Is that you? Do you see yourself like wow, I am learning about so many different countries with so many different people?

Naina: Yes, I do. I want to learn about everything. I am really curious about other cultures. When I was in Lowell high school, I had to take ESL classes. So most of the people there were from different countries; like from Cambodia, China, Myanmar, like that. We used to talk about our countries and stuff we used to say things.

Diana: Okay. Cool. Can you tell me a story that you think is funny or interesting that happened to you once you were here in the states?

Naina: Funny thing is that when I was in Lowell High School, it's really big, right? I got lost.

Diana: I can relate to that.

Naina: Yes, I got lost and every time our rooms were like... I asked some people twice or three times, where they didn't really want to answer me and or maybe they didn't know. You know what I mean? Somebody told me the directions, and I was like... it was my first time there and I didn't really know where is what, you

know? So I was really confused. I think I missed a class actually. I got lost and I missed a class.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: And the funny thing was, it was actually embarrassing. My sister and I were walking in the street holding hands. People here thought that we were homo...

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: They were looking at us like weird, you know what I mean?

Diana: Is that something if you would have done in Nepal, people would think that?

Naina: No, no, that's not the case at all. We can walk around with our girlfriends, holding hands.

Diana: Oh wow. Now that you mention that, it's true though, because if I see a girl and girl holding, I automatically think, "Oh they're a couple."

Naina: Yes, they're a couple, but yes. It is strange, because we didn't really know anything about lesbians... homosexuals.

Diana: Is that a taboo over there in Nepal?

Naina: Not a taboo, but maybe people didn't want to... they didn't really want to talk about it. I mean I feel like there are some lesbians or gay people in Nepal too, but they are not open.

Diana: Oh.

Naina: Maybe they are scared, because . . .

[Cross talking]

Diana: It's not open, like here. Makes sense. What are some of the cultural traditions that you are proud of and once you have... do you have kids?

Naina: No, I am not married.

Diana: Just asking. What are some of the cultural traditions that you are proud of and you want to keep, to pass on to your children?

Naina: I think the first one would be respecting elders, respecting people, not only elders but respecting people. And then, I think I really love my festivals, our festivals, like Dussehra, Dipawali...

Diana: Dusta what?

Naina: Dussehra means...

Diana: How do you say it... Dustara?

Naina: Dussehra...

Diana: Oh sorry, it's Dussehra, I want to learn. It's Dussehra.

Naina: Dussehra. Yes, it's a festival, we call it a good versus evil and then there is like a fight between demons and Gods, like that. It's a long story and yes in good versus evil there is a war and then good wins over bad, you know what I mean? Then we celebrate that.

Diana: How do you guys celebrate it?

Naina: We celebrate it... in Dussehra we just get together, all the relatives and all our family members and then all our elders put tika, tika, just like mixer of red color, red color and then on the rice. We mix it with the rice and the color and the elders put tika on our foreheads and they give us blessing and (inaudible) like money.

Diana: So what does that mean... does... is that protecting you from the evil or something?

Naina: The tika? No, it's not to protect you from evil. It's just like a way of giving kids a blessing.

Diana: Oh, okay, nice. Is there anything that you want to add that I didn't talk about?

Naina: You can ask me...

Diana: ... that you definitely... people have to know this about Nepal? I don't know, that you might want people to know.

Naina: Oh the one thing is that the highest mountain in the world, Mt. Everest is in Nepal and nobody knows that.

Diana: I didn't know that.

Naina1

Naina: Yes because people think it's in China.

Diana: I thought so too.

Naina: No, it's not. Yes, I am like...

Diana: Can you see it or if you are stand and... have you ever seen it from far away?

Naina: No, I didn't get a chance to go there and see it, but it is in Nepal. There are a lot of mountains in Nepal. I don't really... as you know, we were inside the boundaries and didn't really have a chance to go out and see the places, but yes.

Diana: How's the food? I love food.

Diana: What do you guys eat mainly, for example I know all the Hispanics use a lot of rice and beans, American, we eat a lot of I don't know, burgers or fries... what do Nepali...

Naina: We eat a lot of rice too. We eat a lot of rice and vegetables, because most of the people, but not most but half maybe Hindus are vegetarians. So we like a lot of vegetables like cauliflower, potatoes, and that stuff. We eat samosas, momos and that stuff. We have Sel roti... it's like donuts, but a... it's a different kind of donut.

Diana: So it's not similar to Indian food?

Naina: It is like kind of similar, in some ways. We like a mixture of Indian food and Chinese food and we make it like our own style, you know what I mean? Yes, it is influenced from other countries and we make it our own style.

Diana: Cool, trying to think of what to ask you...

Naina: You can ask me whatever you want to.

Diana: Give me a second.

Naina: Okay.

Diana: I think that is basically it. I am thinking, because I am pretty sure that I am going to go back home and I wanted to ask you this.

Naina: I know.

Diana: Like I said, I am not exactly sure yet how they are going to put this in the museum, but basically the whole idea is just... because people have a bad stigma about immigrants. When people think of immigrants, it's... I don't know... people think of... come in... Hi.

Speaker 3: I'm here for the [inaudible]

Naina: I am not sure.

Diana: You can find out at the front desk, right?

Naina: Can you ask at the front desk?

Speaker 3: Okay.

Naina: Okay, thank you.

Diana: You're welcome. What was I saying... oh that people have a bad stigma about immigrants. When people think of immigrants, they think of Mexicans and [inaudible]...

Naina: Yes.

Diana: The museum, basically what they wanted to do is... that's not it. There's so many different things.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: I am an immigrant, you're an immigrant and like when people... we want to break that stigma. So I am pretty sure that you are proud to being an immigrant. Can you explain to people in your own words what it means to you to be an immigrant?

Naina: First of all, in the United States almost all of the people are an immigrant in some way. Just Native Americans are real American.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So they shouldn't say bad things about immigrants, because they are immigrants in some way, their ancestors are if they are not, do you know what I mean? But yes, I am really thankful that the United States allowed us to come here and I don't know give us a good life I would say, because our life was really bad in camps when we came here it was very... I don't know how to explain it, but I am really thankful and I am happy to be here as an immigrant.

Naina1

Diana: Yes.

Naina: I know what my duties are toward the United States. I am not just here to do whatever.

Diana: Take advantage of the system...

Naina: Exactly.

[Cross talking]

Diana: You actually want to give back.

Naina: I do, I actually want to give back to the community and yes, I don't know what else to say.

Diana: I was going to ask you... a lot of little kids. I don't want to say little kids, but middle school. They are going to be some of the first people to see the exhibit and I have an idea. I want to have... I don't know how I am going to do this, but basically in the museum, I want to have something that they push and then you'll say something. Basically, what I want of you is to say in your native language, something like what you just said about immigrants and you being proud of that. Explain to people about immigrants, but I want you to say it in your native language and then translate it. So maybe if we could record something like that real quick... I will give you an example.

My name is Niana...

Naina: Naina...

Diana: Naina, what did I just say... Naina and I am an immigrant from Nepal. I am really happy to be here and thankful. Then say that, but say it in Nepal... in Nepali first, then in...

Naina: Okay, but why do you want me to say it in Nepali, because I don't think they will be able to understand it.

Diana: Yes, but that is the whole purpose. I want them to press a button and listen to your language... just to have like an example of another language. Then after that you can say it in English, so they can understand what you just said.

Naina: Okay.

Naina1

Diana: Okay, so...

Naina: So do you want me to record it again... or start from here?

Diana: Yes, you can start from there, because I am going to edit it. Just have a pause there and then you can say it...

Naina: All right, so I have to first say in Nepali?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Okay. [Following Passage in Nepali] *Namaste ma chai Nepal bata ayeko ek jana immigrant ho. Ma yaha neri aayera dherai khushi chu, plus umm [laughs]*

Diana: That's fine, you can do it again.

Naina: It's like a mixture because I can't really... I know how to speak Nepali, I speak Nepali a lot, but when I am speaking in English plus Nepali....

Diana: Can you... before you start talking Nepali, can you first say your name in English. Hi my name is Niana.

Naina: Naina.

Diana: Why do I keep saying Niana. Naina. So first say, Hi my name is Naina and then say it in...

Naina: Then say it in Nepali?

Diana: And then whatever you said in English.

Naina: In English, okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari [Following Passage in Nepali] *Ma chai Nepal bata ayeko euta immigrant ho, ma dherei khushi chu ki ma ya neri ahile America ma aune chance paye, ra dherei....i'll just say... thankful. Ani ma chai cuz Americans haru kunai kunai dherei American haru le sochchan ki immigrants haru kharab ho, tara ma k bhanna chahanchu bhane immigrants haru sabai kharab hudainan, ra ma chai America lai kehi dina chahanchu, ki hami lai yaha neri ayera kasto ramro kaam gareko cha tesko lagi ma... I want to give back... give back. Okay that's it in Nepali.*

Diana: Okay and you can say even... whatever you said just translate, because trust me, I am not going to be able to translate it.

Naina: Okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari. I'm from Nepal and... you need it... can I say again? I am an immigrant from Nepal and like...

Diana: Yes, whatever you said in Nepali...

Naina: Oh, just translate it?

Diana: All I understood was immigrant, thankful... so whatever you said in Nepali, just translate it.

Naina: Okay, okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari. I am an immigrant from Nepal. I am really thankful that the United States gave us the chance to come here and then study, plus make our life... I mean our future bright. I am proud to be here and I really want to give back to the community for helping us and allowing us to be here. Thank you.

Diana: Any questions that you want to ask me? I don't know if you have any, about the project, about... I don't know, what do you think?

Naina: Yes, if you don't mind can you give me a brief explanation of the project...

Diana: So did Dahvy talk to you about the tree project?

Naina: Yes, a little bit... so...

Interview for “Their Stories: Lowell’s Youth and The Refugee Experience”

Date: November, 2013

Place: International Institute, Lowell MA

Interviewee: Naina Adhikari (from Nepal and Bhutan)

Interviewer: Diana Regus (student at UMass Lowell)

(Recording 1)

Diana: So just for the... oh no I have the number. So just for the recording, can you say your name again and your last name?

Naina: Naina Adhikari.

Diana: And you are from Nepal, right?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: And what... do you guys have countries or states... is it like here where we have states. Do you guys have states?

Naina: We don't have states like here, but we have like regions.

Diana: Regions.

Naina: Like mountainous regions, Terai region, like that.

Diana: So are you from...

Naina: I am from kind of like city, like Terai, it's not a mountainous place, but it's like plain like here.

Diana: Cool. So why... why did you come to the United States?

Naina: Well, it's a long story.

Diana: I have all the time.

Naina: My parents are actually from Bhutan and my ancestors, great-great ancestors were in Nepal before, right. But Bhutan is a very small country and they had a lot of lands too, but the population was very small in Bhutan. So my ancestors heard

Naina1

about Bhutan, right, but in Nepal they didn't have enough land to grow crops and etcetera, so they went to Bhutan without any documents, they didn't have legal documents. They just went to Bhutan because they needed lands to grow crops.

After many years, maybe like a hundred, not a hundred, but 50-60 years, the king decided to ask for... started to ask for the documents. Where are your documents, where did you come from, do you have any legal documents like that and my ancestors...

Diana: So after 50-60 years of living there, they are asking for documents?

Naina: Yes, they are asking for the documents.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: I don't know why and so then... my ancestors didn't have anything to prove that they are immigrants, right? Legal immigrants, so the king started to tell them to move back from where you came from. So they... if your... my parents and grandparents said no... we didn't want to go back, because we had been living here for several years and we got used to it, but the king started to like... rape women and like kill people like men.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: They started to threaten... threaten the people. So they had to move back to Nepal as refugees. My parents and grandparents moved to Nepal in '90-'91 and then we were in the camp... refugee camp. I was born after two years after they moved there. So I was born in the refugee camp and grew up in the refugee camp. I lived there for 16 years.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Once they moved back to Nepal. Why is it that you have to move to a refugee camp? Can you move to the city? Can you move to another area of Nepal? Do you have to be... moving from another country, does that mean that automatically have to go to the refugee camp?

Naina: No, because... well I guess they could, but they didn't have a citizenship of Nepal. So I guess they had to be in the refugee camp, but some people, like the rich

people, they bought citizenship and they moved... they settled in a different places too. Some of them can, but it's rare.

Diana: It isn't like here where you could apply for citizenship.

Naina: Not really.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: It was like that in Nepal, like that, so...

Diana: I am just going to check this again, because last...

(Recording 2)

Diana: So you were born in the refugee camp and you lived there for 16 years. So how did you go from refugee camp to here, the United States?

Naina: There is like a UN, an organization, an international organization for migration. So basically, that organization did everything for us. We couldn't choose a country, like we couldn't choose if we wanted to go to the United States or Australia or like that. They chose the country for us and...

Diana: How do they do that? Did this just go... like how do they...

Naina: I don't know, I don't know how they do that, but if you have a family member who is already here, then they ask, "Do you want to go..."

Diana: Did you guys have family members here?

Naina: Yes, in the United States, but we didn't have anyone in Lowell.

Diana: In Lowell. What was your first impression when you finally made it here to the United States?

Naina: Well first impression was when I got out of the plane; I was really tired because it was 24 hours...

Diana: It's 24 hours?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Oh my.

Naina1

Naina: Almost 24-hour flight, so.

Diana: And you didn't do [inaudible 00:01:08] or anything... you didn't stop... was there any stop in between, was it 24 hours straight?

Naina: Not a 24-hour flight, but we had to wait in between...

Diana: I would die...

Naina: That's a long flight, oh my God; I think it was 13 hours in the plane. Yes, it was really long and I was tired, so I didn't really feel like talking to anyone. But when I got off the plane, people were very polite and helpful. They were welcoming.

Diana: Oh nice.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Is that different from Nepal and...

Naina: Not really, because people are welcoming in Nepal too.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: But I really liked it because we are from different country and even people from here were welcoming and talk to us like we were from here too. Do you know what I mean?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Not like strangers or...

Diana: Not like, who are this people? It's welcoming.

Naina: Yes, it's welcoming.

Diana: Cool. So you were 16 when you got here.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Did you go to... did you go to Lowell, High or did you go...?

Naina: Yes, I went to Lowell High for one and a half years.

Diana: That was your junior year, right?

Naina1

Naina: Junior and senior years.

Diana: How was that?

Naina: Well junior year was very hard. It was just half... it was already the second semester when, no second quarter when I was there. It was really hard to catch up in the classes too. I didn't have really... I didn't know English that much at the time, so it was really hard to communicate with all the students and classmates in the class.

Diana: Trust me, I know.

Naina: I know, it was very hard. Even if you wanted to ask a question in the class like to the teachers, it's really hard to raise your hand and ask. You don't have that confidence to ask questions. You feel like the other students are going to laugh at you, because of your wrong English.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So it was really hard and even though I didn't really understand anything, I would stay after class and ask the teacher like that.

Diana: Yes, I went through that too. I came from the Dominican Republic and it was the same thing, but it was sophomore year, it was second semester of my sophomore year. I hated it, learning a new language and all that.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Was it easy, I mean not easy but at one point say, "Oh my gosh, I'm never going to learn English?"

Naina: No, I didn't have... in my country they asked us to write paragraphs and essays in English, but we didn't really speak. Do you know what I mean?

Diana: Okay.

Naina: We did speak... I knew some of English though, I wasn't like, no English at all, I had to write paragraphs and essays... simple essays, like house, like my country is and like that.

Diana: Okay. You knew some.

Naina: Yes, but I couldn't speak and the tone, accent is really different here, right? Yes.

Naina1

Diana: I love your accent, by the way.

Naina: Thank you.

Diana: So you graduated high school. Are you the only one; did you come with your parents, did you come with more people? Did you have siblings?

Naina: I came with my family, yes. I have two sisters and a brother.

Diana: How old are your sisters?

Naina: My sister is... one of my sisters is 18 and the other 16, so they are both in high school now.

Diana: They are both in high school now, so you were the first one to graduate high school?

Naina: Yes, yes.

Diana: How was that, was it a huge deal in your family.

Naina: Yes, it was huge, because nobody really went to college in my family. My parents didn't have time to go to college and study living in a refugee camp. I was the first one to graduate. I think from Bhutanese community, not only from my family, but from Bhutanese community in Lowell.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Me and my friend Leela, were the only two that first graduated...

Diana: Great, congratulations.

Naina: Thanks. Yes, we really didn't know anything about graduation. In our... in our country, they have a graduation ceremony for college and stuff, but they don't have a graduation ceremony in high school.

Diana: What do they do, do they just pass you?

Naina: They do have a graduation ceremony, but it's really different from here. They do it outside of this and give you a certificate, it's not like a diploma. But they just give you a certificate. There are divisions, not from all schools, but from classes. They give you first division, second division, and third division, like that. They choose three students from a class and give you some kind of prize and then a certificate.

Diana: So how did you... I got the impression that in Nepal or Bhutan that college wasn't hard, because you mentioned earlier that the [inaudible] and all that stuff before it was harder. Did you have the same opportunities to go to college over there that you have here.

Naina: I didn't go to college in Nepal. Because I think I was in 10th grade when I came here, halfway...

Diana: How would that be different? Let's say you graduated from 12th grade in Nepal, would it have been as easy or would you know... would you have the opportunity to go to college, as compared to here that once you got out of high school, you went to college?

Naina: Well in Nepal, we don't have to be... we graduated in 10th grade, right, yes?

Diana: Oh.

Naina: Then 11th and 12th grade, you have to go to college for that, like campus.

Diana: Oh, wow.

Naina: Then after that... but we didn't have any financial aid and stuff. So it would have been really hard to go to college, especially in my community because my dad was the only one working in the family. So yes, it would have been harder for, I think, yes.

Diana: How did you start thinking about college? When did you say, "I want to go to Middlesex and this is what I want to major in?" And what are you majoring in?

Naina: I am majoring in nursing. I always wanted to be a nurse, I don't know why, but since my childhood. I used to love... when I used to go to hospitals... because hospitals in camps are really bad. I don't get enough time to really talk to... like sit down and really talk to doctors one-on-one and it was really packed and you had to wait in line to do stuff. You couldn't really talk to the doctors with your problem one-to-one. You had a nurse and I don't know, it's really different, we didn't have this kind of facilities.

Once my mom was really sick and I was little. We had to take her to hospital and we took her to hospital, but it was really hard to meet the doctor and talk to them. But there was a nurse, she was really nice and she helped us. If she wasn't there, then my mom maybe wouldn't be here. Do you know what I mean? She was really sick. So at the time... I don't know I just feel like just one person can change someone's life.

Diana: That's really nice.

Naina: So yes, I just wanted to be a nurse since that time.

Diana: Nice. When you think of the camps... now help me here, because I am confused, I don't really know exactly what a camp is.

Naina: Okay camps, let me see... we had houses that were bamboo and thatches; they were shelters, not houses. Do you know what I mean? Really small and we used to have two rooms and we lived together with all the family. It was really... the houses were really close and we didn't have water; running water in our houses. We had a water tank and we had to go there to fill water, to get water. Yes and our hospitals and schools were inside the camp, they were not outside. We were not allowed to go outside of the camp.

Diana: For anything, like at all?

Naina: Yes, we weren't supposed to not go outside, but people used to go outside because they had to work out... like work for their families. So they used to go out... they went out not as refugees, they couldn't say they were refugees... they were refugees, they had to say they were Nepali citizens.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Yes, they had to lie and work outside. In the camp, it was very bad, miserable, yes.

Diana: I can imagine.

Naina: I know.

Diana: How many people would you say were at a time were in the camp?

Naina: Oh in our camp it was like 22,000.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: Yes in our camp, just one camp and there were like seven camps in Nepal.

Diana: How big, okay think of Lowell High School and how big that is. Was it a size like that, I mean the...

Naina: The camp?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Oh no, no, the camp was bigger than that.

Diana: Was it like a whole city?

Naina: Not a whole city, but even bigger... I don't know maybe not Lowell, but maybe that... I don't know how to explain, but maybe downtown area...

Diana: Downtown area?

Naina: Yes, maybe bigger than that.

Diana: Okay and was it gated,

Naina: It wasn't gated, but we had some kind of boundaries, yes.

Diana: Yes. I was going to ask what do you miss the most about Nepal?

Naina: I miss Nepal... like the place. It was so beautiful in Nepal, it's green and then we have small lakes and canals.

Diana: Wow.

Naina: Yes, it was very beautiful. I really miss my friends and relatives, because when I first came here, I didn't have any friends, right. I just really had to get... get it mixed with other people. As you know, Lowell High School is very diverse and there are so many people from different countries. It was really hard to be friends with them at first, so I really missed my friends and relatives at that time. Yes.

Diana: Do you think you have changed after coming here to the United States?

Naina: Yes, I think I have, I have changed.

Diana: In a good way, in a bad way?

Naina: Yes, in a good way, yes. If I wanted to change in a bad way, I could because there are some bad influences too but...

Diana: Can you talk more about that, like the bad influences here?

Naina: Bad influences, meaning... like teenagers, right now are really rude. Yes, they are rude. They are very rude, right? Specifically when they talk to elders, they are really rude. They don't care, like they don't respect any elders.

Diana: Very true.

Naina: Yes, but in our culture we really respect elders and anyone who is older than us. Even smaller, smaller people like children, but right now, I know that when I was in high school teenagers were really rude. Some of them were nice, but some of them were like really.

Diana: Yes, no respect for elders.

Naina: Yes, even no respect for friends and they don't care, they just don't care.

Diana: Obviously, that is something that in your culture is very important.

Naina: Yes, it's very important.

Diana: Do you think that... I am not saying you, but I am pretty sure you know of other immigrants. Do you think that other immigrants or even your sisters that you said are in high school now, do you think you could lose that value sometimes?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Or is it really easy to hold on to that value?

Naina: Yes, it depends on family values, because some families are really strict about their values and they don't want their children to lose it. But some families, like we're here in America and you can do whatever you want to, adapt here. They're like that, right? But our family is really... they are in the middle, my parents are not really strict and they are not loose. I mean we have to adapt in America, but you have to preserve your values too, so.

Diana: Good.

Naina: So yes.

Diana: Are there values that you have adapted from American culture that you did not have in Nepal?

Naina: Like...

Diana: Anything, maybe I don't know the way you talk, like the way you express yourself sometimes. Even like how you dress now or even I don't know, the value of education, anything.

Naina: Yes, definitely the way I dress has changed. I used to wear kurtas and stuff.

Diana: What are...

Naina: Kurtas are long, it's a pretty dress. I used to wear that a lot. We are not allowed to wear short skirts and those things. When I came here, I decided to wear jeans and short skirts and those sorts of things.

Diana: How was that. Did you feel weird, different or were you like, "Yes!" Like jeans and skirts.

Naina: I didn't feel weird, but it was... I don't know how to explain that. But yes, it was different.

Diana: How did your parents feel about that?

Naina: At first they were angry, yes. Angry like, "Don't wear that...." like short skirts like that, but later they did understand.

Diana: Yes, that's good. In what ways is the American culture similar to Ne.... do you say Nepali culture or Nepal culture?

Naina: Nepali culture.

Diana: Nepali culture.

Naina: Similarities... I didn't really see any similarities.

Diana: Really?

Naina: Yes.

Diana: Oh wow that's...

Naina: There are some differences though. When we talk to people... that was the hardest thing when I first came here. We wouldn't raise our eyes and talk to people like that... like have eye contact...

Diana: You can't...

Naina: No.

Diana: You wouldn't do that in Nepal?

Naina: No, that is disrespect.

Diana: Oh.

Naina: They might do that in professional business, those things, but not like...

Diana: Talking to... I don't know, my dad. I wouldn't look him in the eyes?

Naina: No, not straight in the eyes. You have to... when you look...

Diana: Like look like... like I was talking to you.

Naina: I know, it's... you can't... that is like dis... disrespect.

Diana: Oh, I didn't know that, that is very interesting.

Naina: Yes, so when I was in class, my teacher was talking to me, right and I was looking down and she is yelling at me, "Why are you not looking at me? You're supposed to have eye contact with me when I am talking. Are you ignoring me, blah, blah, blah...?"

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: No, I was... I didn't know how to...

Diana: Culture shock for you.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: I don't want to look at you.

Naina: It wasn't that bad, but I didn't look at her and I didn't know how to explain to her that I wasn't ignoring her. I think she asked my friend about that... she was like, "She doesn't look at me, what's the problem." She was like, "No in our culture you don't look at people when we're talking, we can't."

Diana: So is that even between families? What about talking to your sisters?

Naina: No that's not the case with sisters and friends.

Diana: But it's elders and people of respect?

Naina: Yes, you have to have respect. If you look down or directly in the eyes...

Diana: That is very difficult.

Naina: It was very different.

Diana: Now when I think about it, it's really not because the way things are going now, people are even afraid to talk to other people. People walk by and you are like, they're like, "Hi."

Naina: I know, because of the technology, texting, video, and everything. People are sitting next to each other and they are texting instead of talking.

Diana: You obviously, never see that in Nepal.

Naina: No.

Diana: If you see someone, do you say good morning?

Naina: Of course, yes, we talk a lot. I didn't have a cell phone when I was back in Nepal, so I wouldn't use a cell phone or have a computer. There were cyber cafes, so we used to go there and pay for it, 20 rupees for an hour and then play on the computer or chat with friends. But we didn't have a computer at home.

Diana: How much is a dollar over there?

Naina: It's 100...

Diana: Because you said 20 rupees.

Naina: Hundred rupees, a dollar, right now but it goes down and up.

Diana: So a soda here is \$2.00, how much would a soda be over there, 200?

Naina: 200

Diana: So it's the same value? For example in DR, this computer might cost me 500 here, but in DR it might cost me 700 dollars.

Naina: It's 100 rupee per one dollar.

Diana: Yes.

Naina1

Naina: If it's \$2 for a soda here, then it's 200 rupees in Nepal, yes double.

Diana: Okay, so things are not more expensive over there, they are the same as here?

Naina: No, they are expensive.

Diana: It's so interesting. Going back to... you were saying... I really like the story about when your mom was... I am sorry your mom was sick. But I like the story that you were saying that you saw that nurse and thanks to that nurse, your mom was able to get better, things like that. Was that like... is that an inspiration to you now to keep doing nursing...

Naina: Yes, it is.

Diana: ... and is that what you would like to be? Do you want to stay here in the states and do your nursing career here or would you like to go back to Nepal and help out?

Naina: I haven't really thought about that, but I would love to go back and help people there, because I think the people in Nepal need more help than people here. There are a lot of laws and they have a lot of facilities here, but not in Nepal... I haven't really thought about that, but I want to do something. Maybe be a doctor later, but yes.

Diana: What are you looking forward to, what do you... you are here now. Do you consider yourself... I don't want to say American, because you're obviously Nepali... how you... is that how you...

Naina: Nepali, yes.

Diana: Okay, I was going to say Nepalian, but that makes no sense. So you obviously consider yourself Nepali, but would you say that now being here, going to college here, and having a career here, and trying to study here... do you consider yourself in a way an American?

Naina: Yes, I do, because I have been living here for four years and the government has really helped us too. I mean for everything, because we really didn't have anything when we first came here.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So the government has, in the United states, has just helped us a lot... So I need to give it back to the community, to the government, you know what I mean? So

I definitely consider myself an American and do whatever I need to do, like a duty.

Diana: Yes. How do you like Lowell... Lowell specific?

Naina: I like Lowell. I love Lowell. In some cities my friends are all over the United States.

Diana: Oh they are?

Naina: Yes, they are and they talk about their cities and etcetera. Some of my friends don't really have diverse communities. They only have like white people, know I mean their community is not as diverse as Lowell, because Lowell is really diverse.

Diana: Do you like that?

Naina: Yes, I like that, because... I don't know, I like...

Diana: Have you... I don't know how you will like these questions, but for example me when I was living in DR, all I knew was Dominicans. So when I came here I never had a Chinese friend or an Egyptian friend or whatever. When I came here I had a friend of every nationality. Is that you? Do you see yourself like wow, I am learning about so many different countries with so many different people?

Naina: Yes, I do. I want to learn about everything. I am really curious about other cultures. When I was in Lowell high school, I had to take ESL classes. So most of the people there were from different countries; like from Cambodia, China, Myanmar, like that. We used to talk about our countries and stuff we used to say things.

Diana: Okay. Cool. Can you tell me a story that you think is funny or interesting that happened to you once you were here in the states?

Naina: Funny thing is that when I was in Lowell High School, it's really big, right? I got lost.

Diana: I can relate to that.

Naina: Yes, I got lost and every time our rooms were like... I asked some people twice or three times, where they didn't really want to answer me and or maybe they didn't know. You know what I mean? Somebody told me the directions, and I was like... it was my first time there and I didn't really know where is what, you

know? So I was really confused. I think I missed a class actually. I got lost and I missed a class.

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: And the funny thing was, it was actually embarrassing. My sister and I were walking in the street holding hands. People here thought that we were homo...

Diana: Oh wow.

Naina: They were looking at us like weird, you know what I mean?

Diana: Is that something if you would have done in Nepal, people would think that?

Naina: No, no, that's not the case at all. We can walk around with our girlfriends, holding hands.

Diana: Oh wow. Now that you mention that, it's true though, because if I see a girl and girl holding, I automatically think, "Oh they're a couple."

Naina: Yes, they're a couple, but yes. It is strange, because we didn't really know anything about lesbians... homosexuals.

Diana: Is that a taboo over there in Nepal?

Naina: Not a taboo, but maybe people didn't want to... they didn't really want to talk about it. I mean I feel like there are some lesbians or gay people in Nepal too, but they are not open.

Diana: Oh.

Naina: Maybe they are scared, because . . .

[Cross talking]

Diana: It's not open, like here. Makes sense. What are some of the cultural traditions that you are proud of and once you have... do you have kids?

Naina: No, I am not married.

Diana: Just asking. What are some of the cultural traditions that you are proud of and you want to keep, to pass on to your children?

Naina: I think the first one would be respecting elders, respecting people, not only elders but respecting people. And then, I think I really love my festivals, our festivals, like Dussehra, Dipawali...

Diana: Dusta what?

Naina: Dussehra means...

Diana: How do you say it... Dustara?

Naina: Dussehra...

Diana: Oh sorry, it's Dussehra, I want to learn. It's Dussehra.

Naina: Dussehra. Yes, it's a festival, we call it a good versus evil and then there is like a fight between demons and Gods, like that. It's a long story and yes in good versus evil there is a war and then good wins over bad, you know what I mean? Then we celebrate that.

Diana: How do you guys celebrate it?

Naina: We celebrate it... in Dussehra we just get together, all the relatives and all our family members and then all our elders put tika, tika, just like mixer of red color, red color and then on the rice. We mix it with the rice and the color and the elders put tika on our foreheads and they give us blessing and (inaudible) like money.

Diana: So what does that mean... does... is that protecting you from the evil or something?

Naina: The tika? No, it's not to protect you from evil. It's just like a way of giving kids a blessing.

Diana: Oh, okay, nice. Is there anything that you want to add that I didn't talk about?

Naina: You can ask me...

Diana: ... that you definitely... people have to know this about Nepal? I don't know, that you might want people to know.

Naina: Oh the one thing is that the highest mountain in the world, Mt. Everest is in Nepal and nobody knows that.

Diana: I didn't know that.

Naina1

Naina: Yes because people think it's in China.

Diana: I thought so too.

Naina: No, it's not. Yes, I am like...

Diana: Can you see it or if you are stand and... have you ever seen it from far away?

Naina: No, I didn't get a chance to go there and see it, but it is in Nepal. There are a lot of mountains in Nepal. I don't really... as you know, we were inside the boundaries and didn't really have a chance to go out and see the places, but yes.

Diana: How's the food? I love food.

Diana: What do you guys eat mainly, for example I know all the Hispanics use a lot of rice and beans, American, we eat a lot of I don't know, burgers or fries... what do Nepali...

Naina: We eat a lot of rice too. We eat a lot of rice and vegetables, because most of the people, but not most but half maybe Hindus are vegetarians. So we like a lot of vegetables like cauliflower, potatoes, and that stuff. We eat samosas, momos and that stuff. We have Sel roti... it's like donuts, but a... it's a different kind of donut.

Diana: So it's not similar to Indian food?

Naina: It is like kind of similar, in some ways. We like a mixture of Indian food and Chinese food and we make it like our own style, you know what I mean? Yes, it is influenced from other countries and we make it our own style.

Diana: Cool, trying to think of what to ask you...

Naina: You can ask me whatever you want to.

Diana: Give me a second.

Naina: Okay.

Diana: I think that is basically it. I am thinking, because I am pretty sure that I am going to go back home and I wanted to ask you this.

Naina: I know.

Diana: Like I said, I am not exactly sure yet how they are going to put this in the museum, but basically the whole idea is just... because people have a bad stigma about immigrants. When people think of immigrants, it's... I don't know... people think of... come in... Hi.

Speaker 3: I'm here for the [inaudible]

Naina: I am not sure.

Diana: You can find out at the front desk, right?

Naina: Can you ask at the front desk?

Speaker 3: Okay.

Naina: Okay, thank you.

Diana: You're welcome. What was I saying... oh that people have a bad stigma about immigrants. When people think of immigrants, they think of Mexicans and [inaudible]...

Naina: Yes.

Diana: The museum, basically what they wanted to do is... that's not it. There's so many different things.

Naina: Yes.

Diana: I am an immigrant, you're an immigrant and like when people... we want to break that stigma. So I am pretty sure that you are proud to being an immigrant. Can you explain to people in your own words what it means to you to be an immigrant?

Naina: First of all, in the United States almost all of the people are an immigrant in some way. Just Native Americans are real American.

Diana: Yes.

Naina: So they shouldn't say bad things about immigrants, because they are immigrants in some way, their ancestors are if they are not, do you know what I mean? But yes, I am really thankful that the United States allowed us to come here and I don't know give us a good life I would say, because our life was really bad in camps when we came here it was very... I don't know how to explain it, but I am really thankful and I am happy to be here as an immigrant.

Naina1

Diana: Yes.

Naina: I know what my duties are toward the United States. I am not just here to do whatever.

Diana: Take advantage of the system...

Naina: Exactly.

[Cross talking 00:30:41]

Diana: You actually want to give back.

Naina: I do, I actually want to give back to the community and yes, I don't know what else to say.

Diana: I was going to ask you... a lot of little kids. I don't want to say little kids, but middle school. They are going to be some of the first people to see the exhibit and I have an idea. I want to have... I don't know how I am going to do this, but basically in the museum, I want to have something that they push and then you'll say something. Basically, what I want of you is to say in your native language, something like what you just said about immigrants and you being proud of that. Explain to people about immigrants, but I want you to say it in your native language and then translate it. So maybe if we could record something like that real quick... I will give you an example.

My name is Niana...

Naina: Naina...

Diana: Naina, what did I just say... Naina and I am an immigrant from Nepal. I am really happy to be here and thankful. Then say that, but say it in Nepal... in Nepali first, then in...

Naina: Okay, but why do you want me to say it in Nepali, because I don't think they will be able to understand it.

Diana: Yes, but that is the whole purpose. I want them to press a button and listen to your language... just to have like an example of another language. Then after that you can say it in English, so they can understand what you just said.

Naina: Okay.

Naina1

Diana: Okay, so...

Naina: So do you want me to record it again... or start from here?

Diana: Yes, you can start from there, because I am going to edit it. Just have a pause there and then you can say it...

Naina: All right, so first say in Nepali?

Diana: Yes.

Naina: Okay. [Passage in Nepali]

Diana: That's fine, you can do it again.

Naina: It's like a mixture because I can't really... I know how to speak Nepali, I speak Nepali a lot, but when I am speaking in English plus Nepali....

Diana: Can you... before you start talking Nepali, can you first say your name in English. Hi my name is Niana.

Naina: Naina.

Diana: Why do I keep saying Niana. Naina. So first say, Hi my name is Naina and then say it in...

Naina: Then say it in Nepali?

Diana: And then whatever you said in English.

Naina: In English, okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari [Nepali passage]... thankful... I want to give back... give back. Okay that's it in Nepali.

Diana: Okay and you can say even... whatever you said just translate, because trust me, I am not going to be able to translate it.

Naina: Okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari. I'm from Nepal and... you need it... can I say again? I am an immigrant from Nepal and like...

Diana: Yes, whatever you said in Nepali...

Naina: Oh, just translate it?

Diana: All I understood was immigrant, thankful... so whatever you said in Nepali, just translate it.

Naina: Okay, okay. Hi, my name is Naina Adhikari. I am an immigrant from Nepal. I am really thankful that the United States gave us the chance to come here and then study, plus make our life... I mean our future bright. I am proud to be here and I really want to give back to the community for helping us and allowing us to be here. Thank you.

Diana: Any questions that you want to ask me? I don't know if you have any, about the project, about... I don't know, what do you think?

Naina: Yes, if you don't mind can you give me a brief explanation of the project...

Diana: So did Dahvy talk to you about the tree project?

Naina: Yes, a little bit... so...

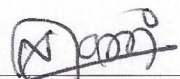


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RELEASE

I, (Print name) Naina Adhikari, hereby
authorize the University of Massachusetts to record my voice and use my
name and biography for educational activities and as part of the "Mill Girls
and Immigrants" museum exhibit at Lowell National Historical Park. I
further authorize the University of Massachusetts to edit, to copy, to use
and to re-use the recording and transcript, in whole or in part for
presentation, exhibition, publication, and electronic and mechanical
distribution in perpetuity.

I understand that I will receive no monetary compensation for the rights
granted herein.

Accepted and agreed to: (Signed) 

Date: 07/02/14

Witnessed by: (signed) Susan Thomson

Date: 7/2/14